



# Maricopa County

## News Release

### Environmental Services Department

1001N. Central Avenue  
Suite 200  
Phoenix, AZ 85004  
Phone: 602-506-6611  
Fax: 602-506-1874  
[www.maricopa.gov/envsvc](http://www.maricopa.gov/envsvc)

Media contact:

Helen Carroll, Office of Communications: 602-506-7068  
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## **HEALTH OFFICIALS WATCHING FOR SIGNS OF WEST NILE**

### **Citizens Asked to Keep an Eye Out for Dead Birds**

The Maricopa County Environmental Services Department (MCESD) asks residents to help detect the possible presence of West Nile Virus by watching for dead birds. Some species of birds are susceptible to West Nile Virus and can provide Health and Vector Control Officers with an early warning of the presence of disease in the bird population before it affects humans.

West Nile Virus is transmitted by mosquitoes to animals, birds and humans. It can cause encephalitis, or inflammation of the brain. West Nile Virus can cause flu-like symptoms, muscle pain and fatigue in victims. It is rarely fatal.

Arizona is one of just four of the lower 49 states that have not reported any cases of the disease since it appeared four years ago. Neighboring states California and New Mexico have reported cases, and health officials say they anticipate the disease will appear in Arizona this year.

If a dead bird is found in Maricopa County, place the carcass in a zip plastic bag, using gloves, and report it to the MCESD Complaint Line at 602-506-6616. If MCESD determines by phone that it wishes to examine the bird, the caller will be instructed how and where to deliver the bird. Acceptable specimens for analysis must meet the following criteria:

- 1) The bird must be freshly dead (less than 24 hours)
- 2) Body must NOT be soft, mushy or decomposed
- 3) Must NOT be a baby bird
- 4) Must NOT be a pigeon

In addition, birds must be kept chilled, but not frozen.

Officials recommend storage of the dead bird in a cooler with blue ice packs.

Freezing will kill the West Nile virus if the virus is present.

When handling the bird, be sure to use gloves or a plastic bag, then wash your hands immediately after packaging it.

Maricopa County residents are also urged to eliminate areas of standing water where mosquitoes breed. Buckets, dog bowls, ponds, decorative fountains and even old toys can collect water and become a perfect place for mosquitoes to lay eggs.

For more information on the West Nile Virus, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention West Nile page: <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/>

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